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SUPERINTENDENT LUNA APPLAUDS 5.1% INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BOISE – The Legislature’s budget-setting committee today approved a 5.1 percent increase in funding for Idaho’s K-12 public schools for fiscal year 2015, which would bring state general funds for Idaho’s public schools to higher than fiscal year 2008 levels for the first time since the recession.

“I am proud of the public schools budget this year because it represents a capstone of what we have been working toward as a state since 2007,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna said. “The budget improves the way we compensate Idaho’s teachers, provides more advanced opportunities for high school students, takes critical steps to restore discretionary funding to local school districts, strongly emphasizes classroom technology, and more. With this budget, we are taking the necessary steps toward implementing the Task Force for Improving Education recommendations and making sure every student graduates from high school prepared for college or the workforce.”

The budget approved today will now go to the full House of Representatives and Senate for approval. If passed, it will need the Governor’s signature before it can take effect July 1, 2014 for the 2014-2015 school year.

Here are highlights of the FY2015 Public Schools Budget approved in the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee today:

- The budget is \$1.374 billion in general funds for Idaho public schools in fiscal year 2015, a 5.1 percent or \$66.2 million increase over fiscal year 2014.
- **Teacher Compensation:** The budget includes a 3.8 percent total increase in ongoing funding for teacher compensation, which includes \$15.8 million to fund the Leadership Awards portion of the Career Ladder Compensation Model for Idaho’s teachers developed by the Task Force, a 1 percent increase in the money that funds teacher salaries at the local level, and funds to increase minimum teacher salaries to \$31,750.
- **Discretionary Funding:** The budget includes \$35 million in discretionary funding for local school districts and public charter schools. Districts use this funding to pay for utilities, health care and other costs at the district level.
- **Professional Development:** The budget includes \$12.15 million for continued professional development for Idaho’s teachers. Of this funding, \$9.4 million will be distributed to local school districts to use for the implementation of Idaho Core Standards, gifted and talented, or counseling. The remaining \$2.7 million will be used at the state level to provide professional development to Idaho’s teachers through Idaho Core Coaches in each region.
- **Classroom Technology:** The budget includes \$13.4 million in continued funding for classroom technology. Of this funding, \$8 million will be distributed to local school districts to spend on integrating technology in the classroom, \$2.25 million will continue to be spent on wireless infrastructure for Idaho’s high schools, \$3 million has been set aside for a second year of technology pilot projects in Idaho’s public schools, and \$150,000 will be used for the online course portal.
- **School Safety and Security:** The budget includes \$2.2 million in funding to be distributed directly to local school districts to invest in Safe and Drug-Free School Programs at the local level.
- **Content and Curriculum:** The budget includes \$4 million in one-time money that will be distributed to local school districts that they can use to purchase instructional content and curriculum that are in hard copy or digital formats.

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